

A Soviet 'Diary' Critical of Mao

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN
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WASHINGTON, Dec. 16 — Against the advice of a consultant, Doubleday has just published a Soviet-supplied book that purports to provide inside information—much of it derogatory—about Mao Tse-tung and his Chinese Communist followers during World War II.

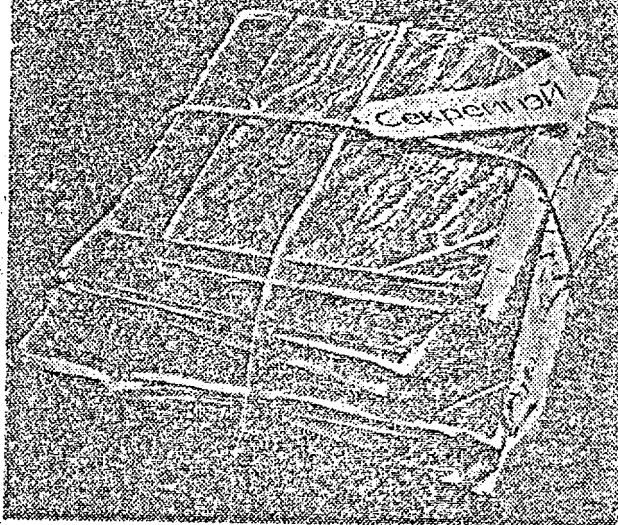
A former Foreign Service officer, John S. Service, who was with chairman Mao during part of the period covered by the book, "The Vladimirov Diaries," submitted a lone critique to Doubleday in 1973 in which he raised questions about the book's authenticity and recommended against publication.

The book, published here on Dec. 5, appeared in Moscow in 1973 under the aegis of Novosti, the Soviet feature service, with a Russian title meaning "Special Region in China." It was sold to Doubleday for \$4,000, according to Stewart Richardson, Doubleday's editor in chief, who asked for Mr. Service's comments after the contract had been signed.

The book is said to be the diary of Pyotr P. Vladimirov, who from 1942 to 1945 was based in Yen-an, in northern Shensi Province, where Mr. Mao had his headquarters. Novosti said Mr. Vladimirov held simultaneous jobs as a Tass war correspondent and a representative of the Comintern, the international Communist organization that was disbanded by Stalin in 1943.

The basic themes of the 538-page book are that Mr. Mao and his followers were not loyal Communists even in the war-time years, that they were anti-Russian and that they were eager to make a deal with the Americans. Individually, Mr. Mao and his circle were described as reprehensible.

THE VLADIMIROV DIARIES



The jacket design of a book just published by Doubleday & Co., on which the tag shown has a misspelling in Cyrillic lettering, of the Russian word for "secret."

Basic Themes Described

Particular scorn was saved for Kang Sheng, the security chief, who died today, and for Chiang Ching, Mr. Mao's wife, was said to have questionable morals with her career "her only concern."

According to the book, Mr. Mao was crude, lazy and interested only in promoting himself.

"This man, who would not hesitate to destroy tens and even hundreds of thousands of lives if the situation and his personal interests warranted it, is noted for his cowardice," the book says. "He puts his own health above everything else."

American Government experts do not doubt his existence.

In telephone interviews, Mr. Richardson said he decided to go ahead despite Mr. Service's recommendation. As a result of Mr. Service's critique, he added, the text supplied by Novosti was cut almost in half, with some obvious errors eliminated.

Moreover, Doubleday printed a prefatory "publisher's note" that acknowledged that it had not seen the original Russian text and said:

"The publisher wishes to point out that the text contains certain inconsistencies and that new 'explanatory' material may have been added. The book should therefore be read as both a historical and a contemporary document."

'Gross Errors' Found

The controversy concerns whether it actually was a diary kept by Mr. Vladimirov or was substantially or even totally fabricated. Mr. Service and American Intelligence officials believe that it may have been based on a journal kept by Mr. Vladimirov but that it has been significantly altered.

"It is clear that some of the added material contains gross errors and affects both substance and emphasis of the books as a whole," Mr. Service said in the critique requested by Doubleday.

"What we have, then, is not the genuine contemporary diary of a Comintern-Tass representative in Yen-an from 1942-45," he said. "Rather, we have an 'improved' and updated work

intended to document a specific version of history and a particular impression of Mao Tse-tung that the Russian Communist party wants to propagate in 1973."

Novosti told New York Times Special Features, syndicate division of The New York Times Company, which canceled plans to syndicate the book to newspapers, that Mr. Vladimirov's diaries were recently discovered by his son, Yuri P. Vlasov, a former world weightlifting champion and now a sportswriter in Moscow.

In a telephone interview from Berkeley, Calif., Mr. Service said of Mr. Vladimirov, who apparently died in 1953, that he seemed to be on the fringe of things in Yen-an.